

## Crystal at South Carolina Department of Social Services Health Occupations Preparation for Employment (Project HOPE)

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Crystal Green moved from Washington, DC, to Beaufort County, South Carolina, along with her military husband and two-year-old son in 2009 and later gave birth to a baby girl. Throughout her marriage, she had to endure abuse on many occasions. Crystal felt that she was helpless and would not be able to make it on her own with two babies and no job, far from her family.

As time went by, Crystal decided that she could no longer subject her children or herself to this type of abuse, no matter how far she was from home or how helpless she felt. She decided that she was worth much more and took a stand to better her future for the sake of her children. One day, when her abusive husband went to work, Crystal moved all her belongings into storage, took her two children, and left the house which they had called home. Crystal moved back to Washington, DC, with her family until she got a call in 2010 stating that her husband had been seriously injured in Iraq. At that time she felt that it was her duty as his wife to return to Beaufort to care for her husband.

Once he got better, the abuse started again. Crystal left her husband's home once again with her two children, never to return. She shared that she had lost her mother at the age of 16 to murder, due to an abusive relationship, and later had to move to Charleston, South Carolina with an abusive grandmother from whom she ran away and moved to Washington, DC, to live with her aunt and father. Despite all of the challenges that Crystal has faced during her life, she continues to stay strong and remain positive.

Today Crystal is a single mother who has been living in Beaufort County for the last two years. Through her choir instructor, she heard about Project HOPE, supported by the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG), funded by the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance, and she decided to give it a try. She says, "I've learned that I need to be more confident in myself and always strive to reach my goals no matter what obstacles come my way."

During Project HOPE Boot Camp, Crystal faced many obstacles, but she did not allow them to cause her to miss any days during Boot Camp. The biggest obstacle was being served an eviction notice the last couple of weeks of Boot Camp, when she had just agreed to take custody of her three-year-old twin sisters. She now had to face possibly being evicted with four young children. After searching for assistance through many different local agencies and being denied, a door finally opened for Crystal and her family. Three days before she graduated from Boot Camp, she was scheduled to appear in court for the eviction hearing, but due to a favor, she was able to get the money that she needed to stay in her home and attend class that morning.

Crystal graduated from Project HOPE Boot Camp on February 22, 2013, with an average grade of 94. She began her Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training at the Technical College of the Low Country in Beaufort three days later and currently cares for her two children, ages six and four, and her two twin sisters, age three. While Crystal has not yet completed any certifications, she has already proven to be successful by ending an abusive relationship and taking charge of her life. She is taking her education one step at a time and will decide what her next steps will be upon completion of her CNA certification.

## **Quinton at South Carolina Department of Social Services Project Hope**

Quinton is a 21-year-old young man from rural South Carolina. He was recruited to Project Hope through the YouthBuild Program, which helps unemployed low-income youth without a high school diploma to obtain a GED and train for an occupation.

Quinton dropped out of high school in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade to take care of his family. His grandmother was the stable factor in the family. After being home for a while, he decided to enter Job Corps. This did not work out, and he returned home with no direction and nothing to do. A friend gave him a brochure about the YouthBuild program. Quinton completed the application and was accepted in the program.

The program helped him improve his academic skills and taught him how to be a team player and build relationships. The program also helped him to understand the job market and his potential. After his grandmother was placed in a nursing home, all of the responsibility for caring for the family, including his two younger sisters, fell upon his shoulders. After Quinton received his GED, the director of the YouthBuild program told him about Project Hope. Quinton informed the Project Hope career counselor that he wanted to further his education, become a leader in his community, and go into the healthcare field. He shadowed an EMS training officer, saw how an EMS helped strangers in distress, and wanted the same opportunity to help others.

When Quinton started Boot Camp, he was extremely shy, but he gradually gained confidence, and the Project Hope staff discovered that he was a special and sensitive young man. During the afternoon classes, the instructor would approach him, shake his hand, ask how he felt that day and what he had to share, and let him see that he could accomplish the task. The instructor gave him the encouragement he needed, and, as the weeks progressed, others witnessed his big heart. Quinton finally felt like he was accepted by his Boot Camp classmates. The Project HOPE staff noticed that Quinton had a journal and was writing with a passion. He told the staff that he loved to write poetry because it made him feel alive and connected to the world. The staff asked him to share his poem during the graduation ceremony.

Since completing Boot Camp at Midlands Technical College, he has been studying at Central Carolina Technical College to become a Patient Care Technician. He has completed CNA, Phlebotomy, and EKG, which are the three required courses for the position, and is awaiting his certification. Quinton is currently enrolled in the EMS certificate program. After completing this certification, his desire is to complete a four-year degree program in a related health field.

Quinton is currently employed full time with Colonial Health Family Practice in Sumter. His employer has complete confidence in him and has provided him training on the CBC machine. The employer's satisfaction with Quinton's work is best summed up in a follow-up email from the hiring manager to the Project Hope Job Developer: "We love

Quinton – thank you so much for sending him to us!